Talks prospect brings hope of end to hostilities

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KIGALI, April 14 (AFP) - The prospect of talks between the conflicting parties in Rwanda brought fragile hope of a halt in the hostilities Thursday.

The sounds of rifle fire and heavy weapons echoed in the hills, but there were no signs of any major offensive and the capital Kigali was relatively calm as dawn broke.

The rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was reinforcing its positions and remained in control of the area in the east of the city which it has held for the past six days.

The RPF failed Wednesday to take a gendarmerie base in the north of the city, according to a well-informed source.

Wednesday's Security Council announcement that the RPF and government were due to meet for talks was a "first glimmer of hope", official Rwandan radio said Thursday morning.

The RPF had previously refused to negotiate with the government and rejected its truce offers.

The two sides are due to meet at the headquarters of the United Nations mission in Rwanda at the Hotel Amahoro in the east of the capital.

Head of the mission General Romeo Dallaire said Thursday it was "premature" to talk of negotiations on a ceasefire. It was more an occasion for the warring parties to talk face to face, he told the BBC.

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